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HISTORY OF THE EMPIRE OF KIANG.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRESS OF TZE-KIANG.

NA-KIN gives the following account of the press of the city of Tze-Kiang in the year of Tyho XIX. The original aim of the public press was to disseminate facts as they appeared on the surface of society. News of occurrences in different parts of the empire, or even beyond the same, were legitimate subjects for the press. Advertisements, also, which communicated facts known only to individuals, were, through the medium of newspapers, made public. Facts worth communicating to the public and of readable interest to the individual being of rare occurrence, it is not surprising that newspapers confined to facts were limited both in size and influence.

Immediately after the establishment of the independence of the Empire of Kiang, and its conversion from an absolute monarchy, or better, a despotism, to a republic, the masses of the people who had acquired a voice in the government became divided, politically, into two parties, the one a progressive party called the To-pos, and the other a conservative party called the Lings. This division in politics was the natural result of the temperament, the food and the worldly position of the people of Kiang. Those who were well-to-do in the world, who had plenty of good substantial food to satisfy the cravings of the appetite, and particularly those who, from a peculiar conformation of the liver and want of physical exercise, and a happy rotundity of form, preferred rest to motion, declared in favor of the *statu quo*. They argued that the recent violent commotions, contrary to all misgivings, had terminated in a prosperous and satisfactory state of affairs, and it was, therefore, best to let well alone and enjoy the result of past efforts in peace. Others, again, who had not yet made a fortune, and who felt hungry on occasions, who worked hard for their daily bread, and whose circulation was rather rapid than sluggish, insisted upon a continuous advance in the way of reform. The public patronage (by no means inconsiderable in Kiang) soon fell into the hands of the To-pos, which made the Lings all the more anxious to wrest it from them. This state of things led the press, ever wide awake to its interests, to add political opinions to its stock of news, partly with a view to give information to the public, and partly for pecuniary support to be derived from the party which sustained it. This new feature not only enlarged the dimensions of the different organs and increased their number, but also induced greater frequency of publication. Papers which had formerly appeared but once in ten days (a week in Kiang) now were published every five days, every two days, and, finally, every day.

When I stated that the original causes of party division were attributable to certain constitutional and

social elements peculiar to individuals, Na-Kin remarks, I do not mean to convey the idea that after the formation of those parties the causes named continued to exercise the same influence; nor did they in the first instance control the public at large, but merely certain personages and their cliques, who, from their high social position, their superior intellect and acknowledged patriotism, commanded the confidence of the public. From this phase of it partisanship became dependent upon accidental friendships, upon hereditary obstinacy, upon pecuniary interests, upon admiration of particular men, upon a certain degree of respectability supposed to be attached to the one party, or a want of it in the other. The daily press, from time to time, devoted an elaborate leader to the discussion of party principles, but finding that this was dry reading for the majority of its subscribers, who had long abandoned reasoning on any subject, an abuse of the opposite party and reviews of the private life of party leaders, misrepresentations of their acts and motives, appeals to the passions and coarser interests, the agitation of religious and national prejudices became the sole staple of political news and information.

To the honor of the press of the city of Tze-Kiang be it remembered that there were honorable exceptions to this rule. Editors who, by generous subsidies from certain cliques and parties had become in a measure independent of popular favor, pursued a dignified course; but unfortunately their stereotyped ideas, their principles out of season, and expedients unsuited to the times, converted them into respectable remnants of a past generation and of an effete policy which could find no response in the hearts of the masses. The press generally, therefore, devoted itself to rapid progress, viz., to that substantial advance which brings the greatest number of subscribers, and, consequently, the greatest number of advertisements.

As the columns of the Press displayed politics, religion, art, literature, law, commerce, banking, legislation, etc., etc., in fact, every detail of human activity, its members assumed a decided partisanship only in the case of politics; this was either permanently or for a certain period of time, and when the latter, they assumed the title of an independent press. In all the other branches of thought as enumerated above, the leading principle was perpetual praise and friendship to all things and all men, excepting in isolated cases where personal or pecuniary interest dictated an opposite course.

First and foremost among the daily papers of Tze-Kiang stands the Hing-ho.* It was edited by an emigrant from the mountainous regions of the island of Co-ling, belonging to China proper, by the name of Nick, or, as he is commonly called, Be-nick,† a man of great skill in the publication of newspapers. When the

* Town Crier.

† Old Nick.

Hing-ho was first established, its editor, Nick or Be-nick, sagaciously observed that a wholesome notoriety would go far toward a reputation with the people of Tze-Kiang. True merit, he said to himself, sometimes meets with posthumous honors, rarely ever reaps reward during life. Men are slow to appreciate what is good, but quick to look at what is curious and startling. Hence, he commenced a bold exposé of his own mental drolleries, with real and imaginary statements of action; he published descriptions of his future wife, incidents of his courtship, his love letters, his successes, his failings, his dinners, his conversations, his virtues, his vices, his tricks and his want of principle in general, in fine everything that men generally consider unrevealable secrets, he exposed to attract the attention of the rabble who find gratification in the contemplation of nature's monstrous exceptions.

Be-Nick, nevertheless, had omitted one class of people who could not be drawn into the crowd of his admirers, namely, the more educated, virtuous and respectable members of society. Those he treated upon the principle of the old schoolmaster, that "The boy who will not listen must feel," and he favored them with personal attacks—true when a foundation could be had in facts, false if truth did not answer the purpose. This system, pursued with constancy for some thirty years, gave the Hing-ho a most extensive circulation, and made Be-Nick a rich man.

Na-Kin gives many extracts in illustration of the foregoing, from which we make selections.

Wamp-um, the Indian juggler, who arrived here last month, gave his first performance last night to an admiring and select audience. Many people did not go to see him because his début was not sufficiently noticed in the papers. His future success will depend upon the manner in which his performances are brought before the public. We think Wampum a promising artist. His performance in throwing up twenty knife blades and catching them on the tip of his nose is truly astonishing. Yet his *salto-mortale* lacks the confidence of an old practitioner. The quiver in the air was somewhat tremulous and too much prolonged for the delicate nerves of an aristocratic audience. Yet we are not unwilling to extend every encouragement to this young artist, and as long as his welfare rests in the hands of the press he cannot fail to succeed.

We wish to draw the attention of the public at large, and to managers and artists in particular, to our job printing office, where handbills, circulars, etc., are executed with the greatest neatness and dispatch, at *fair living* prices.

The election of Py-long for the ensuing year is the all-absorbing topic of conversation. There will be at least four candidates in the field. The To-pos will put forward their favorite champion, Ling, who relies for success entirely upon his party. Our honored contemporary, the Sha-ky, who does the dirty work for the To-po party, has already sounded the trumpet of vulgar praise in behalf of Ling, who is, as every politician knows, no better than he should be, if not a great deal worse. If certain transactions of a private nature, which are well-known to a select few (we do not say that we are of the num-

ber), should see the light of day (and no one knows what the next day may bring forth), his chances are indeed very small. In that case, the battle will be fought between Ning-po and Co-ran, both of them men of the first water. Pum has no chance whatever, his opposition to popular rights being too well known. Neither Ning-po nor Co-ran can succeed upon a strict party vote, for it is apparent that on the day of election the supporters of Pum will throw their influence in the scale of Ling. But there is a very respectable minority not attached to either party, men of intelligence and patriotism, who will finally determine the victory for one of the candidates, and everything will depend upon the voice of the independent press.

Our amiable neighbor of the Ching-Ching does us the honor to say that we have been the sole cause of the election of Po-wow, the late candidate for the office of constable. We rather suspect that Po-wow is also indebted to the Ching-Ching for this victory. If the Ching-Ching, instead of appropriating the funds contributed for the election of its candidate had expended them for legitimate purposes, our friend Po-wow would have had but a slim chance. It cannot be denied that the independent bearing of the Hing-ho commands the confidence of that portion of our voters who cannot be gulled by the transparent selfishness and dishonesty of the Ching-Ching and other paper^o of the same stamp. We are accused of having made the last Gin tail,* of furnishing arguments to our Noo-dels† and Foh-gies,‡ of causing the appointments of high officers of all kinds. We do not thank the blockheads who figure as editors of the Hash-ish, the Ching-Ching and Chow-vow for their compliments, for we are not conscious of having done more than our duty as an able journalist, which is all the more apparent to a discriminating public from the contrast with the imbecility of our jealous and dilapidated contemporaries. *Cho che ting pu huang ky.*§

At this time, continues Na-Kin (which does, of course, not mean this present time in the year of our Lord, 1860, but at the time when Na-Kin was writing a history of the press of Tze-Kiang, some ten thousand years ago),—at this time the Hing-ho had progressed so far in its misrepresentation of facts, that his readers and followers, who, from the general demoralization and ignorance of the country at large, had increased to an alarming degree, absolutely failed to separate truth from falsehood. Men of comparative education did not really know what the principles of contending parties were. Representatives forgot the duties which called them to the Lim-ho;|| they were fearful of following the dictates of their own reason (which was not much), lest the Hing-ho should think proper to excite their rabid constituents to make demands beyond the limits of their conception of right and wrong. Politicians lost themselves in a maze of passionate irritation, to be extricated only by a general reduction of political opinion to first principles.

Another sheet of great influence among a large class

* President. † Representatives. ‡ Senators.

§ This can only be translated by "Let them put that in their pipe and smoke it."

|| House of Assembly.

of voters in Tze-Kiang and throughout the whole country of Kiang, is the Ching-Ching. The two leading ideas of the Ching-Ching were, first, that the party in power ought to give way to some other party not in power, simply because it had power and the other party was not in power, which fact warranted the exclusive sympathies of the Ching-Ching in behalf of that unfortunate party debased and injured as aforesaid; and secondly, that, whereas no political, social or religious institution in this imperfect world is so perfect as to be entirely without imperfections, these imperfections are to be spontaneously converted into perfections, and if this noble end is not to be accomplished without destroying the whole social fabric, it is not to be assumed that we should be deterred from annihilating what is good when a sense of justice tells us that we thereby aim at the annihilation of what is bad.

No system could well be imagined more directly appealing to the passions of the human heart. For instance, a man, in consequence of his indolence, is in want of the necessities or luxuries of life; he buys for his mental consolation a number of the Ching-Ching, where he is distinctly told that the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few is a crime against society, and that it must be punished by an artificial and more equal distribution. The problem is gravely discussed, whether the majority should perform all the labor that a minority might indulge in all the luxuries, or whether the minority should perform all the labor that the majority might indulge in all the luxuries; which problem, if not clearly and satisfactorily solved, plainly demonstrated the fact that the Ching-Ching had raised the banner of reform, and that its issues were to be readily bought as a solace for all thirsty minds. Again, a politician, disappointed in receiving a place, is told in the Ching-Ching that as long as the party in power is not supplanted by the party out of power, the right man could not be in the right place. Another: A man is dissatisfied with his wife. He reads the Ching-Ching, where he finds that his affinity in the shape of woman exists elsewhere and ought to be found. Again, the citizen who is too stolid to have passions of his own, is to be gratified. He reads the Ching-Ching to have pleasurable excitement supplied him from day to day. He there learns that everything that is has many imperfections, and that imperfections ought to be eschewed, and, consequently, that everything should be remodelled under the paternal guidance of the Ching-Ching. The Ching-Ching, in fine, exhibits with a morbid satisfaction the shady side of every object, and ascribes its own presence to the existence of light. With the bright side the Ching-Ching will have nothing to do, for, indeed, it is bright enough without.

(To be continued.)

MOSAIC PAINTING.

(From "Painting Popularly Explained," by T. C. GULICK and J. TIMBS.)

CHRISTIAN MOSAICS: THE LATER ROMAN STYLE.—It is in relation to the history of Art, and especially of Christian and mediæval art, that mosaics assume their extreme interest and importance. For nearly a thousand years—from the fourth century till the revival of tempera in the schools of Cimabue and Giotto—mosaic was almost exclusively employed for mural decoration, and during at least four centuries—viz., from the fifth to the ninth—entirely superseded other methods for such purposes. But for mosaics, then, the art of these long ages would be lost to us, saving and except the knowledge we might glean from missals. The loss of such art would possibly be, for its own sake, not to be regretted, but with it would have been carried a perfect epitome of the religious ideas of those ages; the clue to innumerable symbols and legends; and much which throws light upon the introduction of some of the errors of Romanism—such notably as the gradual elevation of the Virgin Mary to virtually divine honors.

Fortunately, however, of so durable a nature is mosaic, that from existing remains, not only is all this preserved, but every change of style in Art, and every phase of manner, may be distinctly traced. There are mosaics near Rome of the fourth or fifth century in almost perfect preservation, and at Ravenna they are still as fresh as in the days of Justinian. Dominico Ghirlandaio might well say it is the only painting for eternity. St. Mark's at Venice is of itself a complete museum of the works of the *mosaicisti* for several centuries, commencing with the Greek artists of the eleventh century.

The Christian mosaics which decorated the "triumphal arch" and apsis of basilicas, the cupolas of baptisteries, and other parts of the interior of buildings, consisted of cubes of colored glass, the older specimens being generally inlaid either on a white or blue ground, as in the Roman school, or on a gold ground, as in the Byzantine school—at St. Sophia, Constantinople; at St. Mark's, Venice; at Rome, after the seventh century, and elsewhere. The only remaining specimen of Christian mosaic executed in the antique manner appears to be the curious incrustation on the wagon-roof of the ambulatory of St. Constanza, the baptistery erected near Rome by Constantine. It represents a vine; it is, in fact, a *pergola* and has, introduced among the leaves, many Christian symbols. The style is the mixed *opus tessellatum* and *vermiculatum* (*majus* and *medium*) of the ancients, and has none of the characteristics of the various kinds subsequently employed. This is believed to be the earliest and only Christian *wall* mosaic of the fourth century.

All other Christian mosaics may be included in three classes. 1. Glass mosaic, called *opus musivum*—pictorial and imitative, used for walls and vaulted ceilings. The Oriental taste for splendor had shown itself among the Romans, as we learn from the gold-ground mosaic of the late monuments of Pompeii; the transition was, therefore, insensible in this respect to this rich Christian glass mosaic, in which the ground is nearly always gold. The pieces of glass were of very irregular shapes and sizes, and of innumerable colors and tints. The execution is always large and coarse, and rarely approaches in neatness of joint and regularity of bedding to the larger style of the ancients, the *opus majus vermiculatum*. 2. Glass tessellation, called *opus Grecanum*—conventional, generally inlaid in church furniture.